



Mecklenburg County Public Health

COVID-19 Isolation and Quarantine Guidance for Childcare and K-12 School Setting

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is shortening the recommended time for quarantine (after exposure to COVID-19) and isolation (after infection with COVID-19). The change is motivated by science demonstrating that SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) is usually transmitted early in the course of illness, generally 1-2 days before symptoms start and 2-3 days after symptoms start. The guidance below applies to childcare and K-12 school settings. COVID-19 Isolation and Quarantine Guidance for General Population addresses guidance in other settings.

ISOLATE After Testing Positive for COVID-19

An asymptomatic person, regardless of vaccination status:

- **May return to school 5 days after test date.**
- **Must wear a [well-fitting mask](#) for the next 5 days.**

The person must stay home if symptoms develop.

A symptomatic person, regardless of vaccination status:

- **May return to school 5 days since the first day of symptoms AND symptoms of COVID-19 are better, including 24 hours without a fever (without using fever-reducing medicine).**
- **Must wear a [well-fitting mask](#) for the next 5 days.**

The person must stay at home until the fever has been gone for 24 hours without using fever-reducing medicine.

ISOLATE if Symptomatic After Testing Negative for COVID-19 or Receiving an Alternate Diagnosis from a Healthcare Provider*

A symptomatic person with a negative COVID-19 test, regardless of vaccination status, or an alternate diagnosis from a healthcare provider*:

- **May return to school if symptoms have been better for 24 hours, including 24 hours without a fever (without using fever-reducing medicine).**

The person must stay at home until the fever has been gone for 24 hours without using fever-reducing medicine.

** The healthcare provider is not required to provide the alternate diagnosis.*



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QUARANTINE After Being Exposed to Someone with COVID-19

If both people were appropriately and consistently wearing [well-fitting mask](#) (regardless of vaccination status), the exposed person does not need to quarantine. This applies to classroom and other school settings and transportation settings. **Individuals in a mask-required setting do NOT need to be excluded from school after close contact including unmasked exposures (during lunch, naps, or extracurricular activities) if they have no symptoms.**

If the exposed person had confirmed COVID-19 within the last 90 days, and was wearing a [well-fitting mask](#), the exposed person does not need to quarantine.

If the exposed person has gotten a booster dose OR completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccines within the last 6 months OR completed the primary series of J&J vaccine within the last 2 months and was wearing a [well-fitting mask](#):

- **The exposed person may attend school if no symptoms develop** AND not living in a congregate setting such as a shelter.
- The exposed person should test on day 5, if possible.

The exposed person must stay at home and get tested if symptoms develop.

If the exposed person completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccines over 6 months ago and has not gotten a booster dose OR completed the primary series of J&J vaccine over 2 months ago and has not gotten a booster dose OR is unvaccinated:

- **The exposed person must stay at home for 5 days.**
- After returning to school, **the exposed person must wear a [well-fitting mask](#) for the next 5 days.**
- The exposed person should test on day 5, if possible.

The exposed person must stay at home and get tested if symptoms develop.

If the exposed person cannot adhere to masking requirements, **regardless of vaccination status or previous COVID-19 infection**, and/or is under the age of 2, the exposed person should quarantine for 10 days.

Learn More About Isolation, Quarantine, COVID-19, and Flu

Visit mecknc.gov/COVID or call 980-314-9400 for more information about quarantine recommendations, testing information, and other COVID-19 or flu questions and concerns.

"Prevention is our best option: get vaccinated, get boosted, wear a mask in public indoor settings in areas of substantial and high community transmission, and take a test before you gather."

- Dr. Rochelle Walensky, Director of the CDC